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Press Release SG/1378
16 November 1962

TEXT OF LETTER DATED 15 NOVEMBER FROM PRIME MINISTER
FIDEL CASTRO OF CUBA TO ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL U THANT

Following is the text of a communication from Prime Minister Castro to Acting Secretary-General U Thant, transmitted by Ambassador Carlos M. Lechuga, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations:

(Unofficial translation from Spanish)

15 November 1962

"His Excellency, U Thant, Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations

"Your Excellency,

"The conciliatory action which you are conducting as Acting Secretary-General of this world organization is very closely linked with the latest world events concerning the crisis in the Caribbean.

"There is no need, therefore, to dwell upon each and every one of the events, circumstances and incidents which have occurred in these weeks of extreme tension.

"I should like to refer solely to the following matter: we have given you -- and we have also given it publicly and repeatedly -- our refusal to allow unilateral inspection by any body, national or international, on Cuban territory. In doing so we have exercised the inalienable right of every sovereign nation to settle all problems within its own territory in accordance with the will of its Government and its people.

"The Soviet Government, carrying out its promise to Mr. Kennedy, has withdrawn its strategic missiles, an action which was verified by United States officials in the high seas.

(more)

"We should like to repeat once more that the installation of these weapons was nothing other than an act of legitimate self-defense on the part of the Republic of Cuba against the aggressive policy which the United States has been pursuing against our country since the very triumph of the Revolution. This did not confer any right upon the Government of the United States with respect to Cuba, since all our actions have been effected within the framework of international law and in exercise of the sovereign prerogatives of our state. It was, however, the pretext used to perpetrate acts of force which brought the world to the edge of war. The pretext has now disappeared. Nevertheless officials of the United States Government declare that they do not consider themselves bound by any promise, among other reasons because Cuba has not permitted the inspection of its territory.

"The United States, resorting to the law of force, is constantly violating our territory through the use of air forces based in various parts of the Caribbean and on aircraft carriers which it is employing against us.

"We have given proof that we are ready for a worthy peace. We have put forward five points as guarantees, the minimum which any sovereign nation can ask for. We have handed over the body of Major Anderson who died while carrying out an illegal flight over Cuban soil. We have warned the Government of the United States that it must stop these acts of violation of our sovereignty and at the same time we have done everything possible to prevent the occurrence of any incidents in connection with these acts.

"What have we obtained in exchange? The violations have increased in number; every day the incursions of war planes over our territory become more alarming; military aircraft harass our air bases, make low-level flights over our military defenses and photograph not only the dismantled strategic missile installations but in fact our entire territory, foot by foot and inch by inch.

"The capture of the leader of a group of spies trained by the CIA and directed by it, here in Cuba, has shown us how the photographs taken by the spying planes serve for guidance in sabotage and in their operations and has also revealed, among other things, a design to cause chaos by provoking the deaths of 400 workers in one of our industries.

"This impairs in its essence the security of our nation and outrages the dignity of our people. The object has been not only to secure advantages for military and subversive purposes through information and detailed knowledge of our industrial installations and defense arrangements, but also in addition to humiliate and demoralize the Cuban people.

(more)

"These are typically Hitlerite methods for softening the resistance of peoples.

"Mr. Acting Secretary-General, no sovereign state can allow its air space to be violated in this manner without feeling an impairment of its dignity. If in addition this violation is perpetrated by the reconnaissance aircraft of an enemy which openly threatens our country, tolerating it means, more than a lack of dignity, a shameful submission to the enemy. We cannot be asked to accept this by virtue of the discussions which are taking place with regard to the crisis, for the integrity of our physical space and the sovereignty of Cuba will never be negotiable.

"We for our part have not failed to give constant warnings to the aggressors.

"On 27 October, in the midst of the crisis, the Cuban Government declared that it would never acknowledge the vandolic and piratical privilege of any war plane to violate our air space since this was essentially a threat to our security and facilitated the conditions for a surprise attack. Cuba's right to resist such violations can never be renounced.

"Today again through this communication which we are sending you as Secretary-General of the United Nations, we wish to give warning that to the extent of the fire power of our anti-aircraft weapons, any war plane which violates the sovereignty of Cuba, by invading our air space, can only do so at the risk of being destroyed.

"If the United States sincerely desires -- as we ourselves desire -- to take steps toward the solution of the present problems, it should begin by respecting these elementary rights of our country.

"In the history of our Republic, the United States has more than once intervened in our domestic affairs, with the use of force. It secured this right in the first constitution of our Republic, by virtue of a law adopted by the United States Congress, and supported by an army of occupation. The present action of the United States is designed to reinstate, in fact, these militaristic and imperialist privileges.

"The long history of struggle of our country, culminating in full sovereignty and national dignity after a century-long fight written in blood and heroism, cannot be reversed. A powerful military force could annihilate us but it could never make us yield and we should first demand a very high price of the pirates who dared to invade the soil of the Cuban fatherland. And even if we should die our banner would fly victoriously because we are defending something even more sacred than our right as a sovereign nation in the concert of free nations of the earth.

(more)

"We are sounding the necessary alarm for the defense of world peace, we are defending the right of the small countries to be considered on a footing of equality, we are telling all the peoples of the earth that before the imperialist enemy there can be no weakening. The path of calm and stern vigilance, strong in the security of a response commensurate with the magnitude of the aggression, is the only way to the salvation of peace.

"Our right to live is something which cannot be discussed by anyone.

"But if our right to live is made conditional upon an obligation to fall to our knees, our reply once again is that we will not accept it.

"We believe in the right to defend the liberty, the sovereignty and the dignity of this country, and we shall continue to exercise that right to the last man, woman or child capable of holding a weapon in this territory.

"May I reiterate to you the expression of my highest consideration.

Fidel Castro
Prime Minister of the
Revolutionary Government."

* * * * *

FORWARDED COPY FOLLOWS

~~SECRET~~

Control: 5580
Rec'd: November 15, 1962
7:57 p.m.

W
Action
SS
Info

FROM: New York

TO: Secretary of State

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NO: 1802, November 15, 7 p.m.

PRIORITY

DEPARTMENT PASS WHITE HOUSE

EYES ONLY

VERBATIM TEXT

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: State la 7/25/77By RMG, NARS, Date 8/16/77

CUBA

FOL IS UN'S UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF CASTRO'S LETTER
REFERRED TO IN OURTEL.

QTE PERMANENT MISSION OF CUBA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
155 EAST 44TH STREET
NEW YORK 17, N.Y.

15 NOV 1962

NO. 514

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

UPON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF
CUBA, I HAVE THE HONOUR TO TRANSMIT TO YOU THE FOLLOWING
MESSAGE:

THIS EXCELLENCY
U THANT, ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

THE CONCILIATORY ACTION WHICH YOU ARE CONDUCTING AS ACTING
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THIS WORLD ORGANIZATION IS VERY
CLOSELY LINKED WITH THE LATEST WORLD EVENTS CONCERNING THE
CRISIS IN THE CARIBBEAN.

~~SECRET~~

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~~SECRET~~

-2- 1802, November 15, 7 p.m. from New York.

THERE IS NO NEED, THEREFORE, TO DWELL UPON EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE EVENTS, CIRCUMSTANCES AND INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN THESE WEEKS OF EXTREME TENSION.

I SHOULD LIKE TO REFER SOLELY TO THE FOLLOWING MATTER: WE HAVE GIVEN YOU - AND WE HAVE ALSO GIVEN IT PUBLICLY AND REPEATEDLY - OUR REFUSAL TO ALLOW UNILATERAL INSPECTION BY ANY BODY, NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL, ON CUBAN TERRITORY. IN DOING SO WE HAVE EXERCISED THE INALIENABLE RIGHT OF EVERY SOVEREIGN NATION TO SETTLE ALL PROBLEMS WITHIN ITS OWN TERRITORY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WILL OF ITS GOVERNMENT AND ITS PEOPLE.

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, CARRYING OUT ITS PROMISE TO MR. KENNEDY, HAS WITHDRAWN ITS STRATEGIC MISSILES, AN ACTION WHICH WAS VERIFIED BY UNITED STATES OFFICIALS ON THE HIGH SEAS.

WE SHOULD LIKE TO REPEAT ONCE MORE THAT THE INSTALLATION OF THESE WEAPONS WAS NOTHING OTHER THAN ACT OF LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENCE ON THE PART OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA AGAINST THE AGGRESSIVE POLICY WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN PURSUING AGAINST OUR COUNTRY SINCE THE VERY TRIUMPH OF THE REVOLUTION. THIS DID NOT CONFER ANY RIGHT UPON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT TO CUBA, SINCE ALL OUR ACTIONS HAVE BEEN EFFECTED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND IN EXERCISE OF THE SOVEREIGN PREROGATIVES OF OUR STATE. IT WAS, HOWEVER, THE PRETEXT USED TO PERPETRATE ACTS OF FORCE WHICH BROUGHT THE WORLD TO THE EDGE OF WAR. THE PRETEXT HAS NOW DISAPPEARED. NEVERTHELESS OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT DECLARE THAT THEY DO NOT CONSIDER THEMSELVES BOUND BY ANY PROMISE, AMONG OTHER REASONS BECAUSE CUBA HAS NOT PERMITTED THE INSPECTION OF ITS TERRITORY.

THE UNITED STATES, RESORTING TO THE LAW OF FORCE, IS CONSTANTLY VIOLATING OUR TERRITORY THROUGH THE USE OF AIR FORCES BASED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CARIBBEAN AND ON AIRCRAFT CARRIERS WHICH IT IS EMPLOYING AGAINST US.

~~SECRET~~

-3- 1802, November 15, 7 p.m. from New York.

WE HAVE GIVEN PROOF THAT WE ARE READY FOR A WORTHY PEACE. WE HAVE PUT FORWARD FIVE POINTS AS GUARANTEES, THE MINIMUM WHICH ANY SOVEREIGN NATION CAN ASK FOR. WE HAVE HANDED OVER THE BODY OF MAJOR ANDERSON WHO DIED WHILE CARRYING OUT AN ILLEGAL FLIGHT OVER CUBAN SOIL. WE HAVE WARNED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES THAT IT MUST STOP THESE ACTS OF VIOLATION OF OUR SOVEREIGNTY AND AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PREVENT THE OCCURRENCE OF ANY INCIDENTS IN CONNEXION WITH THESE ACTS.

WHAT HAVE WE OBTAINED IN EXCHANGE? THE VIOLATIONS HAVE INCREASED IN NUMBER; EVERY DAY THE INCURSIONS OF WAR PLANES OVER OUR TERRITORY BECOME MORE ALARMING; MILITARY AIRCRAFT HARASS OUR AIR BASES, MAKE LOW-LEVEL FLIGHTS OVER OUR MILITARY DEFENCES AND PHOTOGRAPH NOT ONLY THE DISMANTLED STRATEGIC MISSILE INSTALLATIONS BUT IN FACT OUR ENTIRE TERRITORY, FOOT BY FOOT AND INCH BY INCH.

THE CAPTURE OF THE LEADER OF A GROUP OF SPIES TRAINED BY THE CIA AND DIRECTED BY IT, HERE IN CUBA, HAS SHOWN US HOW THE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY THE SPYING PLANES SERVE FOR GUIDANCE IN SABOTAGE AND IN THEIR OPERATIONS AND HAS ALSO REVEALED AMONGST OTHER THINGS, A DESIRE TO CAUSE CHAOS BY PROVOKING THE DEATHS OF 400 WORKERS IN ONE OF OUR INDUSTRIES.

THIS IMPAIRS IN ITS ESSENCE THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION AND OUTRAGES THE DIGNITY OF OUR PEOPLE. THE OBJECT HAS BEEN NOT ONLY TO SECURE ADVANTAGES FOR MILITARY AND SUBVERSIVE PURPOSES THROUGH INFORMATION AND DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF OUR INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATIONS AND DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS, BUT ALSO IN ADDITION TO HUMILIATE AND DEMORALIZE THE CUBAN PEOPLE.

THESE ARE TYPICALLY HITLERITE METHODS FOR SOFTENING THE RESISTANCE OF PEOPLES.

MR. ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL, NO SOVEREIGN STATE CAN ALLOW ITS AIR SPACE TO BE VIOLATED IN THIS MANNER WITHOUT FEELING AN IMPAIRMENT OF ITS DIGNITY. IF IN ADDITION THIS VIOLATION IS PERPETRATED BY THE RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT OF AN ENEMY WHICH OPENLY THREATENS OUR COUNTRY, TOLERATING IT MEANS, MORE THAN A LACK OF DIGNITY, A SHAMEFUL SUBMISSION TO THE ENEMY. WE CANNOT BE ASKED TO ACCEPT THIS BY VIRTUE OF THE DISCUSSIONS WHICH ARE TAKING PLACE WITH REGARD TO THE CRISIS, FOR THE INTEGRITY OF OUR PHYSICAL SPACE AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CUBA WILL NEVER BE NEGOTIABLE.

~~SECRET~~

-4- 1802, November 15, 7 p.m. from New York.

WE FOR OUR PART HAVE NOT FAILED TO GIVE CONSTANT WARNINGS TO THE AGGRESSORS.

ON 27 OCTOBER, IN THE MIDST OF THE CRISIS, THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT DECLARED THAT IT WOULD NEVER ACKNOWLEDGE THE VANDALIC AND PIRATICAL PRIVILEGE OF ANY WAR PLANE TO VIOLATE OUR AIR SPACE SINCE THIS WAS ESSENTIALLY A THREAT TO OUR SECURITY AND FACILITATED THE CONDITIONS FOR A SURPRISE ATTACK. CUBA'S RIGHT TO RESIST SUCH VIOLATIONS CAN NEVER BE RENOUNCED.

TODAY AGAIN THROUGH THIS COMMUNICATION WHICH WE ARE SENDING YOU AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS WE WISH TO GIVE WARNING THAT TO THE EXTENT OF THE FIRE POWER OF OUR ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS, ANY WAR PLANE WHICH VIOLATES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CUBA, BY INVADING OUR AIR SPACE, CAN ONLY DO SO AT THE RISK OF BEING DESTROYED.

IF THE UNITED STATES SINCERELY DESIRES - AS WE OURSELVES DESIRE - TO TAKE STEPS TOWARDS THE SOLUTION OF THE PRESENT PROBLEMS, IT SHOULD BEGIN BY RESPECTING THESE ELEMENTARY RIGHTS OF OUR COUNTRY.

IN THE HISTORY OF OUR REPUBLIC, THE UNITED STATES HAS MORE THAN ONCE INTERVENED IN OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, WITH THE USE OF FORCE. IT SECURED THIS RIGHT IN THE FIRST CONSTITUTION OF OUR REPUBLIC, BY VIRTUE OF A LAW ADOPTED BY THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS, AND SUPPORTED BY AN ARMY OF OCCUPATION. THE PRESENT ACTION OF THE UNITED STATES IS DESIGNED TO REINSTATE, IN FACT, THESE MILITARISTIC AND IMPERIALIST PRIVILEGES.

THE LONG HISTORY OF STRUGGLE OF OUR COUNTRY, CULMINATING IN FULL SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL DIGNITY AFTER A CENTURY-LONG FIGHT WRITTEN IN BLOOD AND HEROISM, CANNOT BE REVERSED. A POWERFUL MILITARY FORCE COULD ANNIHILATE US BUT IT COULD NEVER MAKE US YIELD AND WE SHOULD FIRST DEMAND A VERY HIGH PRICE OF THE PIRATES WHO DARED TO INVAD THE SOIL OF THE CUBAN FATHERLAND. AND EVEN IF WE SHOULD DIE OUR BANNER WOULD FLY VICTORIOUSLY BECAUSE WE ARE DEFENDING SOMETHING EVEN MORE SACRED THAN OUR RIGHT AS A SOVEREIGN NATION IN THE CONCERT OF FREE NATIONS OF THE EARTH.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

-5- 1802, November 15, 7 p.m. from New York.

WE ARE SOUNDING THE NECESSARY ALARM FOR THE DEFENSE OF WORLD PEACE, WE ARE DEFENDING THE RIGHT OF THE SMALL COUNTRIES TO BE CONSIDERED ON A FOOTING OF EQUALITY, WE ARE TELLING ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH THAT BEFORE THE IMPERIALIST ENEMY THERE CAN BE NO WEAKENING. THE PATH OF CALM AND STERN VIGILANCE, STRONG IN THE SECURITY OF A RESPONSE COMMENSURATE WITH THE MAGNITUDE OF THE AGGRESSION, IS THE ONLY WAY TO THE SALVATION OF PEACE.

OUR RIGHT TO LIVE IS SOMETHING WHICH CANNOT BE DISCUSSED BY ANYONE.

BUT IF OUR RIGHT TO LIVE IS MADE CONDITIONAL UPON AN OBLIGATION TO FALL TO OUR KNEES, OUR REPLY ONCE AGAIN IS THAT WE WILL NOT ACCEPT IT.

WE BELIEVE IN THE RIGHT TO DEFEND THE LIBERTY, THE SOVEREIGNTY AND THE DIGNITY OF THIS COUNTRY, AND WE SHALL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE THAT RIGHT TO THE LAST MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD CAPABLE OF HOLDING A WEAPON IN THIS TERRITORY.

MAY I REITERATE TO YOU THE EXPRESSION OF MY HIGHEST CONSIDERATION.

FIDEL CASTRO
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT"

MAY I REITERATE TO YOUR EXCELLENCY THE ASSURANCE OF MY HIGHEST CONSIDERATION.

(SIGNED) CARLOS M. LECHUGA
AMBASSADOR,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CUBA

STEVENSON

DPB

Note: Relayed White House 11/15/62, 8:15 p.m.

~~SECRET~~

NOTE: Advance copy 83. Forward Principal Officers Executive